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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 63rd MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Thursday, 16 November 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN

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GE.00-46084 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 6) (continued)

Fourth periodic report of Finland (E/C.12/4/Add.1; E/C.12/Q/FIN/2; written replies to the list of issues prepared by the Government of Finland (document without a reference number); HRI/CORE/1/Add.59/Rev.2) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Finland resumed their places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to continue putting questions on numbers 21 to 23 (art.10) of the list of issues (E/C.12/Q/FIN/2).

3. Mr. SADI asked the delegation to provide more information on the effectiveness of the national project to tackle violence against women, since the written replies indicated that the problem had become critical. He invited the delegation to comment on the low percentage of women reporting incidents of domestic violence. How reliable were the reports alleging that women had been deterred from reporting incidents by the notoriously ineffectual response of the Finnish authorities?

4. Mr. THAPALIA asked whether the ongoing national project had yielded any recent statistics and information on violence against women, domestic violence, child abuse and child pornography. Had any substantial attempt been made to determine the causes of domestic violence? Lastly, he asked whether homosexual relations were legal in Finland.

5. Mr. GRISSA said he found it regrettable that the fourth periodic report merely referred the reader to the third report in addressing the issue of "Family" under article 10. Had the definition of "family" changed in the intervening period? Also, were homosexuals permitted to marry or to adopt children, as happened in other Scandinavian countries?

6. Likewise, in dealing with the protection of children from economic and social exploitation, the report again merely referred the reader to Finland's second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/70/Add.3) submitted in 1998, though it did at least give details of the new legal provisions on sexual offences and child pornography. The Committee required specific data on both areas he had mentioned, particularly in relation to sexual abuse of children.

7. Mr. HUNT asked whether the issue of registered same-sex partnerships was on the political agenda in Finland, whether discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation was formally prohibited, and whether, if prohibited, it persisted notwithstanding. What statistical evidence was available?

8. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation to reply to questions put by members, beginning with those still outstanding from the previous meeting.

9. Ms. MAJURI (Finland), replying to questions from Mr. Hunt, said that both the Chancellor of Justice and the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Law constantly monitored the degree of compliance of Finland's domestic legislation with its international human rights obligations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinated the international negotiations in that area, which often proceeded slowly for reasons similar to those encountered by other countries. However, the Ministry had been more successful in its work to raise awareness of human rights in other ministries: the average civil servant was now far more aware of Finland's human rights obligations. One important tool used for that purpose had been the Ministry's report on human rights submitted to the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee in 1998, which set out the main principles of the Government's human rights policy and established a clear framework for administrative action relating to Finland's international human rights obligations.

10. Ms. OINONEN (Finland), replying to a question put by Mr. Hunt, said that every Finnish governmental representative travelling on mission abroad carried a basic "package" comprising the principal international human rights instruments and a booklet containing the 1998 Ministry report, which described in detail the cornerstones of Finland's human rights policy, prominent among which were economic, social and civil rights. In the very near future a new report expanding on the 1998 report would be submitted to Parliament and circulated to all national ministries and to Finnish missions abroad. The Ministry also intended to introduce human rights training for all its staff from 2001.

11. Ms. LIUKKUNEN (Finland), replying to a question put by Mr. Grissa, said that the national Development Programme for Working Life referred to in paragraph 63 of the report was intended to improve work effectiveness and quality of life in the workplace in both the private and public sectors. The private sector accounted for two thirds of all the projects completed to date. According to the assessment data on the whole both management and employees felt that the projects promoted teamwork, active involvement in development, professional development opportunities and bilateral cooperation. Particularly significant was the fact that, in a clear majority of projects, both sides believed that the programme had led to improvements in production, quality of life in the workplace and customer service, and was likely to lead to a long-term increase in staff numbers. In one out of every two projects, the staff considered that the programme had safeguarded their current employment.

12. Turning to questions put by Mr. Antanovich and Mr. Ahmed, she said that the latest labour force survey showed significant regional disparities in unemployment levels. Against the background of 9.1 per cent general unemployment, the lowest rates were in the south and the highest in Lapland. Job creation was at its highest among the information technology enterprises based in Oulu and in parts of the southern and western provinces. One particularly interesting fact emerging from the latest survey was that the 45-54 age group was in a better employment situation than others, not only in subregions where general employment was high, but also in the many subregions of Lapland and Kainuu Province where employment levels were generally well below the average.

13. The employment and economic development centres were operated jointly by the Ministries of Trade and Industry, Agriculture and Forestry, and Labour, and provided services for business, individuals and farmers through a nationwide network divided into 15 regions. The overall objective of the centres was to reduce unemployment while taking into account regional differences in labour force requirements. In a parallel development aimed at improving employment prospects in the regions, the cooperation networks centred on employment offices had been successfully strengthened, resulting in increased numbers of individual initiatives and improved levels of cooperation between governmental agencies and local actors. In 1999, all the regional employment centres had launched development projects designed to make accurate forecasts of local labour demand. Any job seeker who refused a job offer without good reason was automatically barred from receiving unemployment benefit for three months.

14. Turning to the questions relating to fixed-term and part-time work, she said that the Government was well aware of the recent employment problems in the hotel and restaurant industry. The number of fixed-term contracts in the sector had remained stable or had even decreased slightly over the past year, but some 20 per cent of women and almost 40 per cent of men working in the industry were still on such contracts. Regarding the growing pressure on fixed-term contract workers to become self-employed, the Government expected to implement measures to improve the situation in the near future, with the entry into force of a European Union Directive on fixed-term work developed by the European social partners. Moreover, a number of measures had been introduced to improve the legal protection of fixed-term and part-time workers: the new Contracts of Employment Act, which covered all work relationships, had been redrafted in order to clarify their situation; a series of end-to-end fixed-term contracts for the same employer was now regarded as a single work period; and employees in certain non-standard working situations now received holiday and sickness compensation on the basis of a minimum length of service.

15. With regard to the imposition of lay-offs during short-term contracts, the legislation provided that an employee whose workload decreased temporarily could be laid off for up to 90 days if the employer was unable to supply other appropriate work or training. Once the need for such lay-offs became apparent, the employer was required to give notice to the labour representative concerned, or to the appropriate labour authorities in the case of lay-offs affecting more than 10 employees. Employees' complaints were dealt with by the district labour protection office.

16. Ms. JOUTTIMÄKI (Finland) said that Mr. Ahmed's concern about the low number of nurses on full-time contracts touched on a topic hotly debated in Finland: how to attract staff to the health and social welfare services while pay and conditions remained so poor. Although the number of health service employees, including nurses, on permanent contracts had increased in recent years, the pace of improvement had been insufficient to prevent serious recruitment problems. There was also a high level of job segregation in the Finnish labour market, leading to

considerable wage differentials between areas such as health and social welfare and the sectors dominated by men. Although the majority of health and social welfare professionals were women, they still earned much less than men with technical qualifications, despite the fact that both groups' training was comparable in length and level of expertise. The social partners were now actively engaged in formulating new collective agreements on such issues. However, since the Ministry of Health and Social Services was not involved in the negotiations, it could do little more than appeal for the wage increases needed to attract more staff to its services.

17. The rise in domestic violence and violence against partners was a topic which had been debated hotly in Finland since the early 1990s by bodies such as the domestic violence committee of the Council for Equality. A number of studies had highlighted the problem, resulting in greater public discussion and an increase in the number of domestic violence cases coming before the courts. Several major programmes had been implemented, including one entitled "One punch is one too many", which had concluded that the specialized services for both victims and perpetrators were inadequate. Consequently, in recent years the Government had set up national violence hotlines for women and children and had increased the number of refuges for battered women. The Government took a very serious view of the situation, and expected to have wide-ranging statistics at its disposal in 2002, on completion of a major project on domestic violence being implemented by the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health. Much remained to be done, and the future debate on domestic violence was likely to be shaped to a large extent by another major study concluded recently which had outlined the high additional medical, social and legal costs that domestic violence generated.

18. Mr. RIEDEL, commending the delegation on its candid appraisal of the country's problems, said that, where article 10 was concerned, while studies were useful, much more important were the results, which he would like the authorities to discuss more fully in their next report submitted to the Committee.

19. Ms. MAJURI (Finland), explaining the legal aspects of domestic violence, said that the situation had improved somewhat now that such violence had become subject to prosecution. The matter could be brought before the courts even if reported by a third party, and the victim would receive support and legal advice free of charge throughout the proceedings. A number of ministries implemented programmes to combat domestic violence, one such being the committee constituted by the Ministry of Justice to assist victims with problems they faced following the offence. Another committee coordinated victim support.

20. Under the Criminal Code, a victim, after reporting the case, could request the public prosecutor to drop the charges. Accordingly, while the prosecutor had discretionary powers to pursue the charge, in practice it was often withdrawn. In view of the problems to which that situation had led in the past, the Chief Public Prosecutor had issued instructions that charges had to be brought in cases of serious assault, regardless of the victim's wishes.

21. Mr. SADI asked whether any comprehensive non-judicial measures were being taken to address the root causes of violence.

22. Mr. CORTÉS TÉLLEZ (Finland) promised that those measures would be reported more fully in the country's next periodic report. Two years previously the National Centre had launched a campaign to change men's attitudes to domestic violence. One component was a poster entitled "Love Hurts", portraying a woman in her wedding dress with a black eye, which had been prominently displayed throughout the public transport network.

23. Ms. JOUTTIMÄKI (Finland) said that, as in most countries, child abuse was prohibited by law. Yet about 50 cases - some of them fatal - were treated in hospitals every year. Because physical abuse of children was usually inflicted by a parent, it did not always come to the attention of the authorities. In cooperation with the National Centre, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health was conducting a research project on violence against women and children which would continue until 2002. The resulting statistics on family violence would cover child abuse and would be included in Finland's next periodic report.

24. Ms. MAJURI (Finland) said that, at the international level, the pattern was for legislation on homosexual partnerships to develop in three stages: decriminalization, registration, and granting of the right to adopt. Thus far, only Denmark had completed the third stage, though it was also under discussion in Holland. Homosexuality had been decriminalized in Finland. The next phase would be the registration of homosexual partnerships, and the authorities were preparing a proposal in that regard for submission to Parliament. Registration would have the same legal effects as in the case of heterosexual marriages where division of property at the end of the partnership and inheritance rights were concerned.

25. Finland was not yet ready to move to the third stage, the right to adopt, mainly because the parties concerned had shown scant interest in that right, and also because public opinion was reluctant to accept it. However, in such partnerships the status of the children was legally protected. The non-biological parent could seek a guardianship order in the courts. It was not unknown for the surviving partner to apply for adoption on the death of the biological parent. Although the child did not have the right to inherit from the non-biological parent, that problem could be circumvented through testamentary provisions.

26. The subsistence due to children in such households was usually paid voluntarily, obviating the need for imposition of alimony payments by the courts, which in any case could issue such an order only to biological parents. However the child could receive an allowance from public funds if the parental maintenance was inadequate.

27. The Criminal Code specifically stated that sexual orientation could not be invoked as a basis for discrimination. Although the Constitution contained no explicit provision in that regard, the wording "or other reasons concerning his or her person" covered sexual orientation.

28. Ms. LIUKKUNEN (Finland) said that the Council of Ministers of the European Union was addressing the problem of direct discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and of indirect discrimination in the form of harassment at work. The entry into force of the draft directive on the question would greatly strengthen the country's action against such discrimination.

29. Mr. ANTANOVICH reiterated his request for statistics on cases of domestic violence heard in the courts, and asked that they should be included in the country's next report, since it was only on the basis of statistics that the real extent of the problem could be accurately assessed. Finland, which possessed a model welfare system, might wish to set an example to other countries where family violence was still rife.

30. Ms. MAJURI (Finland) said that existing crime statistics did not provide disaggregated figures on domestic violence. A number of studies on the subject contained more detailed figures, which would be submitted in the next report.

31. Ms. JOUTTIMÄKI (Finland), replying to a question from Mrs. Jiménez Butragueño, said there was no pension ceiling. The system was divided into a National Pension Scheme and an Occupational Pension Scheme. The former's main target was to ensure that the entire population was protected against any financial hardship that might result from old age, disability or the death of the main provider. All residents, not Finnish nationals alone, were entitled to an individual pension. Details of the two schemes were set out in the report and the written replies. Protection of the population conformed to the Nordic welfare model. The Occupational Pension Scheme had evolved gradually, so that it was only in recent months that the target rate of 60 per cent benefits had been reached, thereby relieving pressure on the National Pension Scheme, entitlement to which was based on length of residence. Eligibility for a full pension was contingent upon residence in Finland for 40 years after the age of 16. The delegation would submit fuller details to the secretariat in writing.

32. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to put supplementary questions concerning articles 11 and 12 of the Convention.

33. Mr. RIEDEL asked the delegation to explain the discrepancy between the reply to number 24 of the list of issues, which stated that the number of homeless had stabilized, and the statement in paragraph 286 of the report that the number of homeless families seemed to be rising. In either case, Finland would be in breach of its Covenant obligation to reduce the number of homeless. One NGO had reported that serious problems existed in shelters for the homeless. What was the actual situation in that regard?

34. While commending the national programme of action to reduce the incidence of cardio- and cerebrovascular disease and the programme for labelling food to encourage low sodium intake, he inquired about developments since the introduction of the former programme in 1996.

35. Could the assertion made in the reply to number 31 of the list of issues, that there was no indication of an increasing prevalence of mental disorders, have been made because such persons were treated as out-patients and were therefore excluded from the statistics? If so, what was Finland doing to reduce the prevalence of mental illness? It had been reported that sufferers received inadequate support following their discharge from hospital; that they were prescribed obsolete drugs which, although cheaper, had known side effects; and that they were not reimbursed for the purchase of new drugs. Did the authorities intend to change their approach? Also, could the delegation comment on reports that excessively high doses of sedative drugs were dispensed to institutionalized older persons?

36. Mr. CEVILLE, referring to article 11 on the right to an adequate standard of living, and specifically to forced eviction, said that according to paragraph 304 of the report, eviction was defined as a measure which terminated the illegal occupancy of accommodation. Paragraph 306 of the report, however, stated that illegal accommodation did not exist in Finland. Did that mean that forced eviction never occurred in Finland? Furthermore, the Finnish conception of forced eviction did not seem to coincide with the definition provided by the Committee in paragraph 3 of its General Comment No. 7. He would like to know what legislative provisions applied to forced eviction, what forms of protection were accorded, and whether, in carrying out forced eviction, the Government took account of the Committee's General Comment No. 7.

37. Mr. GRISSA pointed out that life expectancy in Finland was now around 80 years, so that conditions such as Alzheimer's disease must be becoming more and more common. The disease was not mentioned in the report and he would like to know how patients were cared for. Had Finland contemplated authorizing the practice of euthanasia in such cases, as was permitted in the Netherlands, for example?

38. Mr. AHMED noted that in its 1996 concluding observations on the third periodic report, the Committee had urged the Finnish Government to take adequate measures to ensure that reductions in budgetary allocations for social welfare programmes did not result in the violation of its obligations under the Covenant. A report issued in 2000 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations cited allegations by two Finnish trade union organizations that cost-cutting in the public health system had led to a reduction in provision of basic and preventive health care services; that public health care staffing was inadequate to cover needs; that waiting lists for various services, including operations, were growing longer and longer; that supervision of municipal health services had deteriorated; and that private care was beyond the reach of most residents of Finland. The Government had apparently made no attempt to dispute those serious allegations, which he hoped the delegation could refute.

39. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO said he had been surprised to learn from his perusal of the Finnish Constitution that only persons born in Finland were entitled to vote in presidential elections. In addition to such disenfranchisement, many other subtle distinctions in various areas of society seemed likely to create categories of first- and second-class citizens. In respect of the right to housing, for example, did legal or practical considerations bar certain social groups from access to housing? Did the phenomenon of squatting exist in Finland and if so, how did the authorities deal with it?

40. Mr. SADI said that Finland seemed to have heeded the Committee's concern about the high rate of heart disease and to have embarked on an effective programme to deal with cardiovascular and cerebral diseases, cancer and diabetes. In the wake of those remedial measures, had there been a significant drop in the incidence of such diseases? Had the public been responsive to the Government's information campaign? Would Finland refer to the Committee's General Comment No. 14, on the right to health, in implementing its new health policies?

41. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that in its next report the Finnish Government should detail fully the nature and scope of the cuts in health and social welfare spending. Not only the Committee but also ILO had expressed concern about the impact of such cuts.

42. Ms. JOUTTIMÄKI (Finland) said that many of the questions asked by the Committee were currently being debated in Finland in the context of attempts to modify the country's social welfare and health policies to cater for future demands, including the ageing of the population. In particular, the role of the municipalities was being subjected to scrutiny. They had broad responsibility for providing education, health and social services and enjoyed great freedom to determine the quantity and quality of such services. Despite the cuts necessitated by the economic recession, the quality of the services they provided had remained fairly high. Under the Constitution, their independence had to be preserved, but the Government could, through the funding process, influence the policies they pursued. Finnish legislation required that services provided by the municipality should match the needs of the community, and in most, though not all, communities that imperative was fulfilled. Discussions were being held on whether certain rights should be made substantive and whether the substantive rights of members of minorities, disabled persons and children should be strengthened. The social impact of the welfare cuts would be detailed in the next report.

43. Ms. KAIVOSOJA (Finland) said there appeared to have been some misunderstanding of the electoral system in Finland. Only Finnish nationals could vote in national elections, but nationals included naturalized citizens as well as persons born in Finland. There was no requirement to hold Finnish nationality in order to vote in local elections. Such arrangements were fairly common in European countries.

44. Mr. CORTÉS TELLEZ (Finland) said that the information requested on discrimination based on sexual orientation was not currently available and would be provided in the next report. Such discrimination did not seem to be systematic or widespread.

45. There had been instances of housing facilities being taken over by squatters as part of a youth movement protesting at housing problems in the 1980s. In most instances solutions had been negotiated with the local authorities to permit young people to remain in the facilities, and some municipal subsidies had even been provided. Several such facilities in Helsinki were now run as housing for young people.

46. Ms. JOUTTIMÄKI (Finland) said that the homeless population currently numbered 10,000 single persons and 800 families. An inter-ministerial working group had been formed to look into the issue.

47. With the decline of institutional care, an effort had been made to provide the mentally ill with non-institutional services, and such services were becoming more and more widespread. As budgetary funding for that purpose was scheduled to increase in future, an improvement in the provision of services could be expected.

48. Suffers from Alzheimer's disease were visited by nurses and social welfare staff to enable them to remain at home for as long as the disease permitted, it being an acknowledged fact that familiar surroundings were helpful. Patients were institutionalized in facilities that were as homelike as possible. Social and health care services for the elderly were also provided in the home. Euthanasia was not permitted, but the health care system provided for the curtailment of medical care if such was the wish of the patient. If the patient was incapacitated, that wish could be expressed on his or her behalf by a family member.

49. Ms. KAIVOSOJA (Finland) said that the questions on the increase in the size of the homeless population, the number of shelters available and the instruments to be employed by the Government for dealing with the homeless would be answered in detail in writing.

50. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to proceed to questions concerning articles 13, 14 and 15 of the Covenant.

51. Mrs. JIMÉNEZ BUTRAGUEÑO asked what emphasis was placed on human rights education for police officers and judges, in view of the high levels of violence against women and children in Finland.

52. Mr. MARCHÁN ROMERO said he was pleased to learn of the entry into force of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, but wished to know what types of cultural activities benefited from the discretionary subsidies granted to promote the Roma and Sami cultures. Did the Government intend to institute a follow-up programme in the wake of the Keppi project to promote cultural development?

53. Mr. CEVILLE said that while it was commendable that the school attendance rate at all educational levels in Finland was among the highest in the European Union, it appeared that 15 per cent of qualified university applicants were not admitted for lack of places. If that figure was correct, what education policy measures were being envisaged to tackle the problem?

54. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO inquired about the nature and volume of education subsidies granted at the different levels of the education system.

55. Mr. SINGH (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO), said that his Organization was appreciative of Finland's support of its work in the fields of human rights education and the right to education generally. In 1997, Finland had cooperated with UNESCO in organizing the UNESCO Regional Conference on Human Rights Education in Europe, and, thanks to its active role in UNESCO's Executive Board and General Conference, the last General Conference had adopted the Overall Strategy for Human Rights Education. The various reports submitted by Finland on the implementation of UNESCO's normative instruments concerning the right to education demonstrated the importance the State party attached to education, and especially to its integral link with cultural rights in the interest of protecting the rights of minorities and ethnic groups. The importance Finland accorded to equal opportunity in education was reflected in the excellent report it had submitted to the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, as well as its advocacy of full follow-up to the Dakar Framework for Action.

56. Mr. HUNT, noting that section 16 of the Constitution of Finland guaranteed basic education for all free of charge, whereas the Covenant provided for compulsory free primary education, asked what distinction the State party drew between "primary education" and "basic education". Moreover, according to paragraph 436 of the fourth periodic report (E/C.12/4/Add.1), the review of legislation relating to educational services had aimed to transfer responsibility from the Government to municipalities. It was the Committee's experience that decentralization sometimes resulted in the inequitable provision of educational services to different regions. Was there any evidence that that was happening in Finland?

57. Mr. SADI said he had hoped that the representative of UNESCO would have commented on the situation with regard to the right to education in Finland, rather than simply informing the Committee about Finland's support for UNESCO's work. Future contributions by UNESCO should refer to continuing shortcomings in States parties' implementation of rights under the Covenant.

58. Ms. KAIVOSOJA (Finland), replying to Mr. Wimer Zambrano's question on budget appropriations for education, said that State subsidies amounting to 57 per cent of total costs were provided for primary, secondary and vocational schools. The remaining 43 per cent of costs were met by the municipalities. As for higher education, all universities were State-run and were therefore financed from the State budget. However, there was currently much discussion in Finland about the level of funding of university research. As it was acknowledged that education was an important tool for confronting the rapid changes taking place in the world, universities had access to private funding for research projects.

59. On the question of the drop-out rate at university level, the Government had devised various strategies for ensuring that students completed their degrees. For instance, universities received funding commensurate with the number of graduates they turned out and the number of doctoral degrees awarded. Furthermore, many enterprises in the electronics sector actively wooed new university graduates with good salaries and attractive packages.

60. With regard to Mr. Hunt's question on the possible imbalance between the educational services offered to different regions, five provincial offices and the National Board of Education, which reported to the Ministry of Education, were responsible for evaluating performance at the municipal level. One of the Government's concerns was the huge distance some students had to travel from home to school. Some teachers had been laid off due to budget cuts in over 40 municipalities in 1998, but that process had been halted with the introduction of new education legislation in 1999, which required students to be taught in a formal school setting.

61. As for special arrangements for specific ethnic groups, separate funds over and above the municipal funding had been earmarked to enable Sami students to receive instruction in their mother tongue. Roma and immigrant children could also receive instruction in their mother tongue for a certain number of hours per week, thanks to subsidies earmarked for that purpose.

62. On the question concerning the difference between basic and primary education, "basic" education was considered to encompass both primary and secondary or vocational education, which were offered free of charge, with one meal per day and free bus passes provided. University education was also offered free of charge, sometimes up to the doctoral level. About 4,000 students enrolled in special doctoral schools, including just under 300 foreign students, were paid about Fmk 8,000 per month to complete their degrees.

63. Mrs. JIMÉNEZ BUTRAGUEÑO reminded the delegation that her important question relating to special courses for police officers and judges had not been answered.

64. Ms. KAIVOSOJA (Finland) said that although she was aware of the existence of several inter-ministerial programmes, regrettably she could not provide a more specific answer to Mrs. Jiménez Butragueño's question. Human rights education had become an important subject in the national curriculum, but every school was responsible for the preparation of its own curriculum on the basis of the national curriculum. Manuals for teachers, including one prepared by UNESCO entitled "How to teach human rights", were also available.

65. Mr. CORTÉS TÉLLEZ (Finland) reminded the Committee that at a previous meeting the delegation had provided information concerning a Ministry of Justice training course provided for lawyers and judges on a voluntary basis. Local courts had funds at their disposal which could be used to that end. Furthermore, training was provided for police officers with the participation of the Finnish League for Human Rights.

66. Mrs. JIMÉNEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said she recalled the information that had already been furnished about training courses for lawyers and judges. What she found surprising was that they were voluntary: in a country where violence against women, children and immigrants was so prevalent, such training should be mandatory, in keeping with United Nations and other international provisions.

67. Mr. CORTÉS TÉLLEZ (Finland) said it was the supplementary, not the basic, training which was voluntary. On another point, the Government recognized the importance of allocating funds specifically for cultural and linguistic minorities, and those activities were heavily subsidized by both central and municipal Governments. Furthermore, an additional Fmk 1.5 million had been earmarked from the education budget for the support of minority cultures and anti-racism projects and in favour of immigrant populations and Roma NGOs. An additional Fmk 1 million budget line had also been allocated to the Sami Parliament for the promotion of Sami culture. Furthermore, special measures had also been introduced to promote the participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities in leisure activities such as sports.

68. Mr. MARCHÁN ROMERO reminded the delegation of his question concerning follow-up to the Keppi project .

69. Mr. CORTÉS TÉLLEZ (Finland) said that the Keppi project had been a one-off three-year project, about which the delegation could provide further information to the Committee if required.

70. Ms. KAIVOSOJA (Finland) said that the Finnish delegation had welcomed the opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Committee on essential aspects of the Covenant which were the focus of the State party's current efforts. The Committee's comments would be transmitted to the relevant authorities and NGOs, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would organize a press conference to inform the public of the Committee's concluding observations. Meanwhile, Finland was committed to continued promotion of the Covenant's provisions at the European and international levels.

71. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Finnish delegation on behalf of members, and said that the Committee looked forward to continued cooperation with the State party. The concluding observations on Finland's fourth periodic report would be made available on 1 December 2000.

72. The delegation of Finland withdrew.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.